

A.U.M.L.A.

Journal of the Australasian Universities Modern Language Association

No. 1

August 1953

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EDITORIAL ADDRESS:
c/o THE DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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*Journal of the
Australasian Universities
Modern Language Association*

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EDITORIAL

THE Australasian Universities Modern Language Association came into being at a congress held in Melbourne in August 1950, on the initiative of Professors A. R. Chisholm and R. H. Samuel, of the University of Melbourne. Its aim, as defined in its Constitution (adopted at the Second Congress, held in the University of Sydney in August 1951), is "the advancement of modern language study and research in Australasian Universities, by the holding of congresses, by the publication of a learned journal, by the facilitation of study leave abroad and of the exchange of Staff members, and by whatever other means may from time to time be found appropriate."

Foundation members of the Association are the members of the teaching and research Staffs in the schools of French, German, Dutch, Italian, Russian, Hebrew and Arabic in the Universities and University Colleges of Australia and New Zealand. Membership of the Association is open to all members of University modern language Staffs, whether permanent or temporary, engaged in either teaching or research work.

This, the first issue of the journal A.U.M.L.A., is being published to synchronize with the third Congress of the Association in the University of Adelaide, August 1953. Subsequent numbers of the journal will be published, as funds and circumstances permit, at intervals to be decided upon at the Congress.

R. T. S.

A WORKING EXEGESIS OF MALLARMÉ'S COUP DE DÉS

This exegesis does not pretend to be definitive. It is literally a working explanation, the purpose of which was to enable students, in a course given in 1952, to read this difficult composition of Mallarmé's without a feeling of frustration.

In the Preface written for the *Coup de dés* as it appeared in the review *Cosmopolis* in May 1897, Mallarmé said: "Tout se passe, par raccourci, en hypothèse; on évite le récit. Ajouter que de cet emploi à nu de la pensée avec *retraits, prolongements, fuites*, ou son dessin même, résulte, pour qui veut lire à haute voix, une *partition*. La différence des caractères d'imprimerie entre le *motif prépondérant*, un *secondaire* et d'*adjacents*, dicte son importance à l'émission orale" (my italics).

In the same preface, referring still more specifically to music, he writes: "On en retrouve plusieurs moyens m'ayant semblé appartenir aux lettres, *je les reprends*" (again my italics).

So, then, the poem borrows (or rather, takes back) some means of expression characteristic of music; it is a score (*partition*), and it has running through it a main, a "secondary" and some "adjacent" themes (or variations).

Now in music principal and other themes do not build themselves up to completion and then disappear for good. They fade away (*retraits*), reappear perhaps more lengthily (*prolongements*), are again submerged (*fuites*), and so on. And the only way in which Mallarmé found it possible to apply this technique to poetry was to *make the themes recognizable* at each reappearance by allotting to each one a special sort of typography.

The themes in the *Coup de dés* are as follows:

(1) The "motif prépondérant", in large capitals, which appears on pages¹ 1, 2, 5 and 9, is:

UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD.

(2) The "secondary" theme, in ordinary roman capitals, appearing on pages 2, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 11, and closely related to the main theme, is taken up by various instruments, as it were, immediately after the terrible JAMAIS of Theme 1. It is:

¹ By "pages" I mean the double pages (11 altogether) on which the poem is set out

QUAND BIEN MÊME LANCÉ DANS DES CIRCON-
STANCES ÉTERNELLES DU FOND D'UN NAUFRAGE –
SOIT LE MAÎTRE – EXISTÂT-IL COMMENÇÂT-IL ET
CESSÂT-IL SE CHIFFRÂT-IL ILLUMINÂT-IL.

Note that the "il" in "existât-il" etc. refers not to "Maître" but to "Le Nombre", which is intimately bound up with the theme of the Master.

(3) A third theme, in italic capitals, begins on page 6:

COMME SI . . . COMME SI . . .

It is never completed; yet it becomes in a way its own crescendo in an "adjacent" theme set out in slightly larger italic capitals and beginning on page 8:

SI C'ÉTAIT LE NOMBRE CE SERAIT . . .

The phrase is not completed within the theme to which it belongs: it passes over into the recurring main theme before its grammatical meaning becomes clear:

CE SERAIT LE HASARD.

The second and third themes have each a sort of "variation", which takes the form of a commentary or narration. The variation on Theme 2 is in ordinary roman ("hors d'anciens calculs" etc.); that on Theme 3 is in ordinary italics ("*Une insinuation simple*" etc.).

Briefly, the "argument" of the poem is somewhat as follows:

If by a throw of the dice we could determine the resultant number, we should have abolished Hazard. But this is obviously impossible. And if we transfer this impossibility on to a more metaphysical plane, we find that human intelligence can never hope to determine a human destiny. The universe is a chaos created by Hazard, a meaningless abyss; and intelligence is only one among the many accidents constituting "reality".

However, thanks to mathematics, we have succeeded to some extent in measuring the universe; and measure being a coherent reality, we thus seem to have imposed order on the cosmic disorder. The Master of Theme 2 represents this mathematical principle.

But we are wrong, and so is the Master, who perishes through

his mistake. We are all mortal, and we cannot conquer that tragic hazard, mortality. And so the magic Number, even if the Master could determine it, even if it existed ("existât-il") and could be computed exactly ("commençât-il et cessât-il"), would none the less be Hazard.

The one vague hope is that somewhere in the disordered sky a sort of new Constellation, not created by blind Hazard as are the other stars, but built up by the collective efforts of human intelligence over an immense span of centuries, will record man's history, which is "un compte total en formation" (p. 11).

In other words man, even though he cannot vanquish Hazard, may succeed *collectively* in introducing into the universe a principle of *measure*. Though each measurer (including the Master of Theme 2) dies, the measuring intelligence lives on from generation to generation – which is of course quite true.

In examining the details, it would be too tedious and too complicated to follow up each theme separately. The best we can do is to observe as we go how the various themes are woven into the total structure.

The poem begins with four great "chords", in a sea of silence represented by the blank paper on p. 1:

UN / COUP / DE / DÉS.

I imagine that wide blank space, that surrounding silence, as the silence of expectancy that ensues when a conductor raises his baton, followed by a new silence (the left side of page 2 is also completely blank) in which the opening chords vibrate and are transformed into subtle psychic prolongations.

This second interval in the case of Mallarmé's poem is so prolonged that an almost intolerable anguish begins to fill the silence; and when this anguish has reached its breaking point there comes another shattering chord:

J A M A I S

Then almost immediately (the spacing represents a slight pause) the orchestra begins the second theme; but after a few phrases ("Quand bien même . . . soit") the variation or commentary or explicative passage begins ("que l'Abîme . . ." etc.).

The word "soit" belongs to Theme 2, and is apparently put at

the top of page 3 to show that the rest of the page is a variation on this theme. It is *grammatically* attached to what follows ("soit que l'Abîme . . ."); but it is both grammatically and musically attached also to "le Maître" on page 4, which belongs to the theme proper.

Page 3 is devoted to an evocation of the Abyss, the Sea that represents Hazard or Nothingness. This sea is tumultuous, white with foam, but the immense wave that was mounting skyward is poised ("étable") for a terrible moment. Then its resounding fall begins; sloping down, it desperately tries to maintain its equilibrium, to hover like some great bird ("plane désespérément"). But this sea-bird's wing is fictitious, not real; for the wave's own wing ("la sienne") had been foredoomed to fall after the immense effort of lifting the wave again to its present height; and as this real wing fell it blotted out everything at its base: the jets of spray, the incipient upward movements of a new wave ("les bonds"). Note that the description of the falling wing and collapsing wave is reinforced by the very appearance of the words on the page. From "blanchi" to "les bonds" they sprawl right across the paper, with a long, sloping movement. The next part of this page is peculiarly difficult. The word "résume" has, I think, its Latin meaning: the Abyss *sucks back into itself* the shadow at the base of the wave. This shadow is cast by a second sail (the wave or wing having become, by a natural poetic transition, a sail). This second sail is a ship in the trough of the wave; and the sea sucks its shadow into its depths ("très à l'intérieur"), to the extent of taking its measurements ("l'envergure") for the grave which it is preparing for the ship. A possible translation of the words from "jusqu'adapter" to "d'un bâtiment" would be: "To the extent of adapting to the width (of the ship) its own gaping depth, as if it were (en tant que) the hull of a vessel. . . ." And note again that the ship's position in the trough of the wave is pictured by its situation at the bottom of the crowded page.

We come to page 4. The words "le Maître" (introduced by the "soit" at the top of the preceding page: "Take as an example of 'circonstances éternelles' the Master in his last mortal hour") stand at the top of the page, an appropriate position for such a concept as mastery. The disordered disposition of the words over this page represents no doubt the movements of the angry waters all around this solitary personage. At the same time, the spaces between words sometimes serve as punctuation, as in the

case of the phrase "comme on menace", which is virtually preceded and followed by a comma. It would be woefully wrong to read straight on: "Comme on menace un destin et les vents".

This Master is the product of mankind's immemorial efforts to control chaos and its symbol, the sea ("surgi d'anciens calculs"). But the Master is mortal, old; he remembers the "anciens calculs", but has forgotten how to apply them. Each one of us finds himself one day in this tragic situation: what is the use of knowing all the rules of life when one's last hour has come?

The verb belonging to "le Maître", which is "hésite", comes much further down on the page. Meanwhile there is a long interruption. The Master infers, from this tumult at his feet, from this horizon seething from end to end ("conflagration . . . unanime"), that the moment has come when he has to make the supreme calculation, determine the right throw of the dice, if he is to survive. He infers that the "unique Nombre" is in preparation; that it will offer itself to the hand capable of seizing it vigorously, in a gesture recalling the clenched fist of one who threatens ("comme on menace"). This unique Number cannot be another mind: each man has to work out his own salvation.

The phrase "pour le jeter dans la tempête en replier la division" goes with "l'étreindrait": the Number offers itself to the hand that will grasp it to cast it into the storm and still its furious disorder ("division"). Why did Mallarmé put it in this curious position, so far from its verb? Perhaps in order to accentuate the tumultuous, spasmodic way in which thoughts are rushing through the Master's mind, as he is assailed from all sides by the fury of destruction.

For a similar reason no doubt, another phrase is similarly dislocated: "l'unique Nombre qui ne peut pas être un autre Esprit . . . et passe fier". The Number offers itself, but disdainfully: Take me or leave me!

But the Master hesitates; and this hesitation, unfortunately, might seem to evoke Hamlet, to the undoing of unwary commentators, more particularly as there is a velvet bonnet and plume in another passage (p. 7) dangerously evocative of Elsinore.

Well then, the Master "hésite"; and here an important grammatical point has to be considered. In French one says, surely, "hésiter à faire quelque chose", not "hésiter plutôt que de faire quelque chose". It follows that the phrase "plutôt que de jouer . . . la partie au nom des flots" is merely interpolated into the main

construction. The complement of "hésite" comes only at the top of p. 5: "à n'ouvrir pas la main".

Let us go back. The Master is already at the mercy of the waves. He is virtually a dead man already, almost swallowed up by the water, out of which emerges only his hand; and in this hand is what he thought was the magic Number. He is thus separated by the length of his arm ("par le bras écarté") from the secret that he possesses. It is a desperate moment, but he hesitates, even though death now seems inevitable, *not* to open his hand and make the throw; he prefers to hesitate thus, rather than to let the waves have their way and win their game without resistance on his part. For he still has his human dignity, and does not wish to go down wholly demoralized, beaten into blind animality by the thought of old age and inevitable death ("en maniaque chenu").

And then (in a passage marked by magnificent compression), mindful of this human dignity, he resigns himself, tries no desperate struggle; his beard, through which a wave is already flowing, is itself a symbol of calm resignation ("barbe soumise"). Such is the total and direct shipwreck of every human life. The mind, the man himself, passes away, his ship or body being already engulfed; what matter? a ship, a body, at this last moment, anywhere, would be vain ("une nef n'importe où vaine").

On page 5 we find a further explanation of the motives for which he hesitated. He was tempted to open his hand and throw the dice, not in the hope of besting the sea, but in order to pass his secret on to his successors. Such is the ancient, *ancestral* gesture ("ancestralement"): though a man's knowledge cannot save him from ultimate death, he bequeaths it to posterity. The magic Number, the total knowledge towards which man struggles through so many avatars, is thus a legacy handed on as each generation disappears ("legs en la disparition"). It is an ambiguous legacy, for who will be able to make a total use of it and conquer death?

Who is the heir? It is "l'ultérieur démon immémorial": the genius of mankind, that immemorial capacity for thought which belongs to all humanity and transcends the individuals ("ultérieur"). In short, the Master bequeaths his secret to the intelligence of his race.

It was this "ulterior daemon", existing in the past and the future, nowhere and everywhere ("de contrées nulles"), that had

urged the old Master on towards this final encounter with Hazard, seeking the secret law of probability.

This ageless, placeless human intelligence is the "ombre juvénile" of the Master. And this shadow, this collective human mind, is indestructible. During this storm and innumerable other tempests it has been "caressée et polie et lavée" by the vicissitudes of life and death, thus surviving the destruction of all human individuals. The bones, so hard, are none the less perishable, and go down with the ship ("perdus entre les ais"); but the waves only make collective human genius more supple—mortality itself is a harsh but magnificent discipline.

Whence comes this thinking mind of man, this enduring daemon, "celui son ombre juvénile"? Our remote ancestors ("l'aïeul") had already, thanks to their native intelligence, attempted an idle throw of the dice against Hazard ("la mer"). Hazard in its turn had played a game against these primordial men, by eternally presenting them with new problems to solve. And from this long give-and-take, this sport between man and chaos ("ébat"), human genius was born.

This mating ("fiançailles") of man and Hazard had given rise not only to human genius, but to the great vital illusion, which had sprung forth ("rejailli") to haunt for ever both man and chaos. We can understand that this illusion would for ever haunt man; but why or how could it haunt chaos? Mallarmé offers no clue; but he is probably assuming that, from that primordial moment onward, chaos, in spite of itself, bore the marks of meaning imprinted on it by man. This idea prepares the way, incidentally, for the idea of the Constellation that is to come later.

But we are still immersed in a pessimistic movement of the poem; and this veil of illusion ("Mâyâ", as Leconte de Lisle called it) is as useless as the phantom of the Master's last gesture; it too will totter, collapse like the folly that it is, and will not *abolish* Hazard. Notice how powerfully Mallarmé brings in the main theme at this point. The expression "n'abolira" crashes down like thunder on the lonely whiteness of the half page. At the same time the main theme is linked to the variation on Theme 2 by the rhymes on the two sides of the page: "Chancellera s'affalera n'abolira"; while the word "folie" on the left side not only faces "n'abolira", but in a dim, suggestive way partly rhymes with it:

(f)olie (n'ab)oli(ra).

Page 6 brings us to the third theme and its variation. The theme itself is hesitating and vague, consisting of *comme si* at the beginning and again at the end of the double page. It later merges into the more coherent *si c'était le nombre ce serait . . .* in slightly larger italic capitals.

The variation or commentary that begins here is a sort of compressed history of metaphysical thought, as it passes through two of Comte's "trois états", namely the theological and the metaphysical. As for the third, or positive state, Mallarmé, as a poet, naturally does not consider it.

In the evolution of human thought there are, latent in the human mind, two possible explanations of the cosmos. On the one hand, that simple lucidity which insinuates itself ("une insinuation simple") into the chaos of the external world, silently ("*au silence enroulée*"); also ironically, because this lucid, penetrating intelligence knows in advance that it itself is still only an accident. On the other hand, that religious imagination which does not wait silently, but "precipitates" and cries aloud its mystery. And presently this religious urge will manifest itself in a whirlwind of faith ("tourbillon"), wherein will be heard the happiness of heaven, the horror of hell.²

But we are here in the early limbo of thought, in anthropological rather than in historical time; and so this twofold possibility flutters about the gulf of chaos, without for the moment imposing on it any doctrines or any thoughts ("*sans le joncher*"); but also without leaving it. Man will never leave it. And each of the two potential explanations softly awaits ("*berce*") the first sign that the gulf will give, the first (but as yet "virgin") chance of interpretation.

After a tentative reintroduction of the *Comme si* theme, the variation continues on p. 7. The potentiality of an intellectual interpretation, still lonely and bewildered, floats above the gulf (its loneliness is visually expressed by the almost blank half page). It is a mere feather in the wind of anthropological time. But at last it is encountered or lightly brushed by "*une toque de minuit*"; that is to say, it is given concrete form by the brain of some early thinker ("toque" easily suggests thought. Cf. the English expression: "to put your thinking cap on". And "minuit" calls up the idea of midnight oil).

² This interpretation is supported by Littré's definition of *hilarité* as "joie douce et calme". That is of course the prime meaning of the word.

At a certain moment in the evolution of thought, then, some intelligent mind; some "bonnet" whose velvet is ruffled by the sombre irony of its own scepticism ("esclaffement sombre"), seizes the fluttering feather of speculation, turns it into a lucid thought, and so makes it clear, implacable, rigid.

But thought is still something rare; and such a bonnet is too isolated, "dérisoire", being in opposition to the religious idea ("ciel"), not to mark its wearer lightly and differentiate him from ordinary mortals. He is in reality a prince of the spirit, but living in the bitterness of exile, on a reef far out in the chaos of life, where others do not venture. He dons that dangerous cap in the same way as a man dons heroism. This heroic thought will ultimately be irresistible; but he knows it must not yet be revealed: his practical common sense ("*sa petite raison*") makes him compress it within him, like a thunderbolt that will some day explode. He is the silent precursor of future heresiarchs.

And so he remains (p. 8) silent, worried; expiating his own thought, because he already has a glimpse of the terrible truth that life has no meaning. He is still adolescent ("*pubère*"), because his thought, however daring, is still only sketchy compared with the thought that will come later in human evolution. And silently he thinks: "How laughable it all is!" ("*rire*." For this elliptical use of "rire" cf. "*O rire si là-bas une pourpre s'apprête*", in *Victorieusement-fui le suicide beau*). How laughable! For . . . But he does not complete his thought. Note that the reinforced form, "que si", is here made up of one word in the variation and one whose special typography assigns it to the Number theme. The latter will explain why all this is "laughable".

The feather now in the cap of this lord of thought, lucid but vertiginous, shines on his brow. The brow is invisible. Why? No doubt because this early thinker lives somewhere on the other side of history, unknown and unrecorded. Then its shadow falls on a mysterious form that emerges from the sea, that is, from chaos (the sea being the symbol of chaos or Hazard throughout the poem).

This curious, charming form resembles a mermaid, which is natural enough in the context. It is "ténébreuse", because it represents the spirit of chaos, in which there is no light. But the human mind, ever ready to give sense and meaning to the universe, imagines that the cosmos is good and beautiful; that is why this figure is "mignonne". The passage could almost be a

criticism of Greek mythology, which saw the hidden forces of nature as nymphs, etc.

But this sceptical early thinker is no mythologist, he is, rather, a primordial Socrates. And so, when the *shadow* of his *luminous* thought (this deliberate oxymoron is Mallarmé's, of course) falls on it, the graceful figure vanishes; remaining only long enough to ("*le temps de*") buffet with its scaly tail the rock where it was standing. The rock is in fact unreal, since there is no reality in chaos; and the siren, by buffeting this false symbol of stability ("*faux manoir*"), forces it immediately to evaporate. That false stability had been a mere fiction of human imagination, imposing a limit ("*borne*") on the infinity that knows no limits.

And now at last (p. 9) we come to the main part of the Number theme, which began with that *si* in extra large italics on the previous page. Suppose it (i.e. the secret of the Master) were the magic Number after all? Note that this theme has its own variation, in smaller italics than those of the preceding variation.

Suppose it were the Number, revealed by the stars ("*issu stellaire*"). Why by the stars? Doubtless because they are, in the universe, the most plausible symbol of an eternal order. At this point Mallarmé begins to interweave this theme with the theme of the Master, set out in roman capitals; naturally, because the Number theme refers to the Master and his secret.

If, then, this Number existed ("*existât-il*"), otherwise than as an hallucination diffused by the tumultuous thought of the Master in his death-struggle; if it were actually calculable, measurable, having a beginning and an end; suddenly appearing because it had been denied, and rounded off ("*clos*") by its act of apparition; produced at last by a mass of mathematical formulae ("*profusion*") reduced to a simple, absolute formula ("*rareté*"); if it could be worked out ("*se chiffât-il*"); if, as a proof and demonstration of the magic total, assuming that there is ever so small a possibility of such a total ("*pour peu qu'une*"), it could enlighten us on the secret of life and death; it would still be worse than, neither more nor less indifferent than, but equivalent to . . . Hazard.

Note the masterly fashion in which Mallarmé answers his own series of more or less optimistic questions and wonderings by this devastating intrusion of the main theme: LE HASARD.

What is the meaning of this withering reply? I presume Mallarmé intends us to understand that the Number itself, even

if it could be discovered, would still be only Hazard, seeing that it would have been calculated from data furnished by the cosmos, which is itself chaos, hazard. And so the same thing happens to the Number as happened to the siren: chaos produced them both, and reabsorbed them both: an admirable interweaving of two different movements in the poem.

We come back, naturally enough, to the variation in which the siren had appeared. So, then, all the thought represented by the plume and the bonnet, all that lucid interpretation, has been as useless as everything else. Even that luminous thought had been no more than a rhythmic suspension or postponement of the final, utterly destructive revelation ("*sinistre*"). And it falls and is engulfed in the sea of chaos whence it came ("*écumes originelles*"), after having leapt to a height whence it thought it could dominate the gulf. That height had been withered and destroyed by the indifference ("*neutralité*") of the universe, which is ever the same ("*identique*").

One question remains with regard to this passage. Why did this lucid thought, when it could recognize so clearly the nothingness of all things, hope to dominate the abyss of Hazard? No doubt because the thought that *recognizes* chaos proves its own existence, or seems to do so, by this recognition. *Cogito ergo sum*; or, as Valéry puts it:

Je suis en toi (nothingness) le secret changement.

The second theme returns (p. 10), dimmed and attenuated by its encounter with the terrible theme of Hazard. All the thought of the Master, of all the Masters, has been useless. Nothing remains of that memorable moment when he had hesitated between action and resignation. And even if he had carried out his intention ("*se fût l'événement accompli*"), nothing would remain; his gesture would still be vain with regard to any effective result; not superhuman, but pitifully human: "*rien n'aura eu lieu. . .*" The sea, now calm and empty, proves it; this ordinary, non-violent upward sweep of its waves reveals, by its very placidity, the absence of the Master, who has disappeared as all mortals do. No result, nothing remains except the place ("*que le lieu*") where this useless drama had been played out: the Master has gone, chaos persists.

The commentary or "variation" amplifies this grim statement.

Even this nondescript, almost inert lapping of the waves is stronger than human striving; the sea can take its ease, smoothly wiping out the last traces of that vain striving ("acte vide"). It had to show its disdain by this sudden change ("abruptement"); otherwise that rebellious thought of the Master, illusory though it was ("mensonge"), would have destroyed the power of chaos by denying the existence of the void which swallows up all reality.

And yet Theme 2, weakened as it has been, comes back once more (p. 11). It is the human theme, and humanity is still going to have the last word (cf. Valéry's *Cimetière marin*).

The general argument of this final page is that everything is ultimately swallowed up by the void, except perhaps a man-made constellation, which records all the centuries and millenaries and which thus, despite everything, imposes measure on the infinite. The same idea (with the difference that Mallarmé uses the symbol of a star, the planet Earth, rather than that of a constellation) is expressed in a highly condensed form in the sonnet *Quand l'ombre menaça*:

L'espace à soi pareil qu'il s'accroisse ou se nie
Roule dans cet ennui des feux vils pour témoins
Que s'est d'un astre en fête allumé le génie;

where the "feux vils" are the ordinary stars created by Hazard, whereas the Earth has a light of its own, man-made and triumphant over chaos: human genius is immortal.

And now let us look at the details. Where is "l'altitude aussi loin qu'un endroit fusionne avec au-delà"? Surely it is the horizon; but a celestial, not a terrestrial horizon. So then, very high and very far, as far as the skies' horizon, there is perhaps a new constellation. One does not notice it; it is beyond our interest, save the vague and general sort of interest in the au-delà ("quant à lui") aroused by certain obliquities and declivities of its light; it is somewhere beyond the terrestrial North, up near the celestial Septentrion.

It lies so far away that it is shrouded by the frosts of oblivion (disregard for genius) and "désuétude"; yet not so cold and dead as not to record, on some blank space in the upper ether, the successive striking of the spiritual clock among the empty stars ("sidéralement"); the hours and the long, long centuries that are slowly building up a complete human chronology, a magnificent sum of human achievements. Man has invented time, and time

is gradually imposing its measure on the eternity of the empty cosmos.

This human chronology is watching, doubting, moving on, shining, meditating, before stopping at some final point which will consecrate and round it off (for, just as a human life is completed only by death, human chronology will be completed only when man has perished).

And so the poem ends on its opening theme; but an opening theme that has been patiently conquered and absorbed and humanized by Theme 2. Every clear, bold thought is a throw of the dice; no single throw can abolish Hazard; but the long, patient, courageous, measuring efforts of thought are building up something of their own, something that *will have existed by its own right* even when man shall have perished from the earth.

A. R. CHISHOLM

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SHAKESPEARE IN FRANCE—AN EARLY STAGE ADAPTATION

It is now nearly a century since there appeared the first serious attempt at a survey of the influence of Shakespeare on the French stage. Much later came Jusserand's more scholarly study, followed by Fernand Baldensperger's survey, the book by Haines devoted to the criticism of Shakespeare in France, and a fairly complete survey of French translations of Shakespeare.

All these works, like other articles and theses on the question of Shakespeare in France, lay varying emphasis on criticisms, translations and stage performances. The most recent of all, by Paul van Tieghem, does recognise the part played by music in the "acclimatisation" of Shakespeare on the continent.¹ Our purpose here is to draw attention to a musical adaptation of the *Merry Wives of Windsor* which antedates by some eight years the Ducis stage adaptation of *Hamlet* in 1769: *Les Deux Amies ou le Vieux çoquet*, an opéra comique, libretto by Antoine Bret (1717-92), music by Papavoine, performed at the Comédie Italienne on 7 December 1761.

This work had no influence on later musical adaptations, for it was performed only once. Its interest—purely historical, as far as Shakespeare in France is concerned—is twofold; firstly as one of the earliest recorded performances of a Shakespeare adaptation; secondly for the fact that the play was introduced to a French audience with the aid—or should we say under the disguise?—of music. It is a not completely isolated instance of a Shakespeare play that appeared on the French stage in musical form before it was given in purely dramatic form.

The first to draw attention to the relations of *Les Deux Amies* with Shakespeare was the eminent musicologist Arthur Pougin—

¹ Albert Lacroix: *Histoire de l'influence de Shakespeare sur le théâtre français* (Bruxelles 1856).

J. J. Jusserand: *Shakespeare en France sous l'ancien régime* (Paris 1898; English edition 1899).

F. Baldensperger: *Esquisse d'une histoire de Shakespeare en France* (Études d'histoire littéraire, 2e. série. Paris 1910).

C. H. Haines: *Shakespeare in France, criticism Voltaire to Victor Hugo* (London 1925).

A. Dubeux: *Les Traductions françaises de Shakespeare* (Paris 1932).

A. C. Keys: *Les Adaptations musicales de Shakespeare en France jusqu'en 1870* (Paris 1933).

Paul van Tieghem: *La Découverte de Shakespeare sur le Continent* (Vol. III of *Le Prémantisme*, 1947).

naturally enough, in an article devoted to the composer, not the librettist.² In 1901 the *Deux Amies* first appears in a list of musical adaptations of Shakespeare.³ The composer's name is again given; the failure of the work is attributed to the poor libretto, but no author's name is given.⁴ It is again mentioned a few years later in a special study by Kruse of the musical history of the *Merry Wives*⁵ – but the name of the author still remained unknown. Kruse however does make some attempt to take literary history into account by making two interesting observations: firstly that in Germany, the *Merry Wives* became known "later than most of Shakespeare's other plays"; secondly that Wieland's eight volumes of translations of Shakespeare (1763-66) did not include the play. In France, as we shall see, these two features were curiously reversed: the *Merry Wives* was the first comedy to be known or performed, and it figured in the first French translation of Shakespeare.

A few years after Kruse, M. Baldensperger is the first literary historian of Shakespeare in France to give attention to the possibility of Shakespeare's becoming known through the medium of performances of pantomimes and operas based on his works. After referring to the influence of certain Shakespearean subjects on horrific melodramas of the early nineteenth century he continues in these significant words:

"Il arrivait même qu'on dût descendre plus bas encore pour trouver du Shakespeare sur la scène française. Certains livrets d'opéras ou de "tragédies lyriques". . . délayaient pour des fins vaguement musicales les originaux anglais."⁶ But for M. Baldensperger and Dubeux, the first appearance of Shakespeare on the French stage is the adaptation of *Hamlet* by Ducis in 1769.

² Supplément à la *Biographie universelle* de Fétis, t. II, p. 300 *sub verbo* Papavoine.

³ Max Friedländer: "Shakespeares Werke in der Musik: Versuch einer Zusammenstellung" (*Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*, XXXVII, 1901).

⁴ All this information is probably derived, through Arthur Pougin, ultimately from the notice in the *Mercure de France*, Jan. 1762 (where the date Sept. 7 is almost certainly a misprint for Dec. 7). The only other contemporary reference I have discovered (also going back to the same source) is in the *Histoire de l'opéra bouffon* by Contant d'Orville (Amsterdam 1768).

⁵ G. R. Kruse: *Falstaff und die lustigen Weiber in vier Jahrhunderten* (*Die Musik*, Berlin, Jahrgang VI, 1906-07). The substance of these latter articles is accessible in the introduction by the same author to the Reclams-Universal Bibliothek edition of Nicolai's opera (1849) (*Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor: Komisch phantastische Oper in drei Aufzügen von Otto Nicolai nach Shakespeares gleichnamigen Lustspiel gedichtet von Hermann S. Mosenthal*).

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 194.

In the meantime a MS. of the libretto of *Les Deux Amies* had made its way into the famous Soleinne collection. It there appeared as "*Les Deux Amies ou le Vieux Garçon (ou le Vieux Coquet) comédie en 3 actes, vers et ariettes par Ant. Bret*", with the approving signature of Crébillon and the date 1761.⁷

Here at last is the name of the author, but the MS. itself was missing at least as long ago as 1932. By a happy chance a copy was discovered in the library of the Paris Conservatoire—probably not the one referred to in the Collection Soleinne, but more likely a "fair copy".⁸

"Qui sait même" said Mercier in 1784, "si l'on n'ira pas jusqu'à confondre le commentateur et l'auteur, et si l'on n'attribuera pas par exemple à M. Bret les comédies de Molière? Car enfin son nom se trouve lié à jamais aux oeuvres de l'auteur du *Misanthrope*".⁹ If Bret himself ever read this passage, it must have given him a satisfaction that no other event in his unsuccessful career as a man of letters ever afforded him. Indeed if his name is known at all nowadays it will be due to his handsome centenary (1773) edition of Molière in six volumes, perhaps to his *Mémoires sur la Vie de Mademoiselle de Lanclos*, or to a passing reference to him in *Le Neveu de Rameau*. There with a mention of his only dramatic work that ever had any success, *Le Faux Généreux*, he is lumped in with Palissot and "tous les musiciens décriés, tous les auteurs qu'on ne lit point, toutes les actrices sifflées, tous les acteurs hués, un tas de pauvres honteux, plats parasites. . . ."

In his *Réflexions sur la Littérature* (1772) Bret loudly proclaims the virtues of seventeenth-century comedy, and of Molière in particular. For tearful comedy and the "drame bourgeois" of his own day he has nothing but scorn—at least in theory; for near the end of his career, in the vain quest for popularity, he made a particularly disastrous excursion into

⁷ *Table générale* du catalogue de la Bibliothèque dramatique de M. de Soleinne . . . rédigée par M. Goizet. (Paris 1845, t. 3, No. 3060.)

The catalogue itself was published by le bibliophile Jacob in three volumes in 1843-44. The catalogue of MSS. at the Bibliothèque nationale (Collection Soleinne m. fr. 9243) reproduces the above description.

⁸ Bibliothèque du Conservatoire Th^b 1853: *Les Deux Amies ou le Vieux Garçon, comédie en trois actes et en vers mêlés d'arriettes* (sic) 72 pages in quarto unnumbered, no date or name of author.

A note dated 20 June 1934 at fol. 277 (Bib. nat. m. fr. 9243) now records: "Manque ici la pièce intitulée *Les Deux Amies ou le Vieux Garçon* par Ant. Bret."

⁹ *Mon bonnet de nuit* (Neuchatel 1784), p. 289.

"drame": *l'Hôtellerie* (1785) an adaptation of *Der Gasthof oder Trau, schau wem* by Johann Brandes (1774).

He is a grim protagonist of the great century of French literature; his opposition to nefarious foreign literature is deep-rooted—again theoretically. "Notre avantage dramatique est peut-être le seul en matière de littérature que nous ayons sur nos voisins; gardons-nous de le compromettre en les imitant, et que notre théâtre conserve toujours son éminence sur ceux d'Italie, d'Espagne et même sur celui d'Angleterre." It is true that these words did not appear until long after the failure of *Les Deux Amies*. Perhaps too, the fact that he was adapting an English play for the purposes of the inferior genre of opéra comique was some salve to his literary conscience.

The action of the play takes place at the house of Blandin-Ford in the country (where, the librettist tells us in the person of Mme. Ariste as she gives instructions where to dump Dorante, things are more free and easy than in town). As the title suggests the plot deals with the advances of Falstaff-Dorante to Mesdames Blandin-Ford and Ariste-Page. The incident of the clothes-basket is retained, and a certain "vieille Suzon" corresponding to the old woman of Brentford in the original is the unwitting provider of the female garments in which Dorante attempts to make his second escape. This episode is omitted both in Boito's libretto used in Verdi's *Falstaff*, and in Vaughan Williams's *Sir John in Love*. But true to the traditions of the Théâtre Italien he is severely fustigated by the two burgesses aided by their worthy spouses.

The verses are probably no more undistinguished than many other opéras comiques of the period. So much was indeed conceded by the *Mercure*: ("Cette pièce nouvelle n'a point été jugée mal écrite ou mal versifiée"—which is more than can be said of some of Bret's later comedies). As for Papavoine's music (of which no trace exists as far as I am aware) "les connaisseurs ont été satisfaits de l'harmonie", and in fact even applauded certain airs. But not even the acting skill of Mademoiselle Favart (who probably, though we are not told, sang Mme. Blandin) could carry the play to a second performance. What then was the reason for its failure?

The *Mercure* suggests differences of national taste and of manners—rather too obvious a reason at that period. It also hints that the mixture of music and action was injudicious and then says outright: "La comédie et surtout la comédie d'intrigue

ne peut jamais qu'être embarrassée par le fastueux cortège de l'harmonie; ses forces accablent la simplicité des agréments propres à Thalie." It is true there are over thirty airs scattered through the play, which would not help to expedite the action. But there is another and even more cogent reason why the action lags.

There are two servant characters that have no direct counterparts in the original: Charle—valet to Dorante, and Nérine—soubrette to Mmes Blandin and Ariste. Nérine has a limited dramatic use in announcing entrances, but also moralizes at unnecessary length. When Charle too, holds up the action to read his master a lecture on his foolishness, one can imagine an audience growing restive. Bret here is probably trying to live up to the principle of *castigat ridendo mores* in which he firmly believed. The minor characters in short, as in others of Bret's comedies, have too much to say to too little purpose. If the whole play had been about half its length, its chances of success would probably have been correspondingly greater.

Falstaff, be it noted, is not presented as a portly drunken sot as he was in the one-act *Falstaff* of Leuven, Saint Georges and Adolphe Adam of 1857, to be reviled by critics for his gluttony, drunkenness and rotundity. Here he is merely "un franc libertin, un coquet, un conteur, un agréable enfin," a former merchant now over fifty and posing as a marquis. The Molièresquely named Ariste is a mere foil to the jealous Blandin, just as his wife is to the artful and resourceful Mme. Blandin.

How was it that Bret chanced upon the *Merry Wives* as the subject for an opéra comique? It has often been remarked that Shakespeare's comedies have found less favour in France than his tragedies. The only two comedies appearing in the *Théâtre anglois* of La Place (in partial translation only) were "*Les Com-mères de Windsor*" and "*La Méchante Femme corrigée*".¹⁰ There is no doubt at all that Bret borrowed from La Place, as an examination of the MS. shows.¹¹ And is it a mere coincidence

¹⁰ Both in t. IV (1746).

¹¹ Bret's lines (spoken by Blandin-Lagrué):

Il est vrai, je craignois de manquer de respect
Que m'inspiroit sa modestie;
Et j'avois tout l'air de celui
Qui s'aperçoit que sa maison bâtie
S'élève injustement sur le terrain d'autrui.

are clearly based on La Place's paraphrase of Ford-Brook's lines:

Like a fair house built on another man's ground . . . (II, 2).

that Bret's comedy *Les Deux Soeurs* or *l'Humeur à l'épreuve* (performed – as usual unsuccessfully – in 1767) contains the main element of the plot of *The Taming of the Shrew*? As early as 1738 the *Merry Wives* (together with *The Tempest*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*) had been the object of what M. Baldensperger calls "un examen sympathique" in the *Pour et Contre* of the abbé Prévost. In 1759 or 1760 it is supposed to have appeared at Mannheim, though I have never been able to see a copy under the title of *A Trompeur, trompeur et demi* and the suspect authorship of one "Portelance". Some seven years after *Les Deux Amies* Bret's friend Barthe produced *Les Fausses Infidélités*, a one-act comedy in verse on the same subject (1768).

Altogether then it is clear that in addition to its appearance in La Place's *Théâtre anglois* there was more chance of the *Merry Wives* being known in France at this time than any other Shakespeare comedy. Bret, a dramatic poet of no originality whatever, but seeking something new, was probably prepared to try anything once. In this case the subject happened to be part of a Shakespearean comedy. Of him could probably be said what was said by Pfitzner of other adapters of Shakespeare: "Die Bearbeiter der Shakespearschen Dramen sehen in jenen eben nur das, was auch der Schneider in der alten Hose sieht, wenn er eine Weste daraus machen will: 'Stoff'."¹²

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¹² Max Kraussold: *Geist und Stoff der Opern-dichtung* (Vienna 1931).

THE WEN ON GRANDET'S NOSE or SI J'AI RENCONTRE FOEDORA?

Some Problems for the Research Student

We reason from the known to the unknown; standing on a rock of certainty we fling wide the octopus arms of speculation to embrace all alluring suggestions, ranging in successive gradations from the highly probable to the remotely possible. We shall meet Foedora in many guises on our way, and more than once we shall discover the existence of a Foedora who appears in real life some time after she was described in fiction, as if, contrary to the accepted order of events, the thing of flesh and blood was brought into being at the prompting of the thing imagined.

But we shall begin by examining the wen on Grandet's nose.

It is unusual and a rare distinction indeed, to have, like Grandet, a wen on the nose. Consider the noses of other mighty men. Cicero had a wart on his—"celuy-la," reports Amyot, "avait au bout du nez comme un poireau, ou une verrue, qui semblait proprement un poy chiche dont il fut pour cela surnommé Cicéron". Oliver Cromwell had a wart on his: a less considerable excrescence, and lodged on the side of the nose. These were both historical warts, and their owners seem to have made little or no use of them. Yet Cicero could surely have made more of his wart than Oliver Cromwell could of his. It was on the tip of the nose, like Grandet's wen. It was like a leek, it must have been a very prince among warts. However neither Plutarch nor any other writer describes this splendid leek-like appendage as having twitched against Catiline, as having turned purple against Verres, although in position and conformation it seems more akin to Grandet's wen than any other wart or wen that is known to us. The main difference between a wart and a wen seems to be that the wart must for ever remain inanimate and unaware of its owner's inmost thoughts. One can imagine Balzac toying with the idea of grafting Cicero's wart on to Grandet's nose, and then rejecting it in favour of a wen. Cromwell's wart seems to have interested him not at all. It was known to him, of course; he had devoted his first poetic drama¹ to Cromwell, a popular figure with French men of letters at this period (Victor Hugo wrote a play of the same title and not much more notable save for its preface).

¹ *Cromwell*, 1819.

Grandet's wen, however, has every right to stand on Grandet's nose as an independent creation. It surpasses nature and history, it is a sign of personality, a summing up of character. It may be asked whether Balzac foresaw, from the first appearance of the wen, precisely what its action would be during the course of the novel. May it be that the wen sometimes got away from him, as I suspect it did once or twice from Grandet himself? It can and does move, but are its movements controlled by him, or are they involuntary? Does it not betray him more often than it enables him to express what he prefers not to define in words? Let Grandet's wen be brought forth and considered.

It is veined, which argues its generous proportions and its power of changing colour;² it is believed by those about him to be the seat of his shrewdness. Its movement ironically admits Grandet's knowledge of his brother's bankruptcy and suicide when he tells Cruchot that he would throw Eugénie into the Loire rather than let her marry Charles — but Cruchot does not understand the working of Grandet's wen. It seems to swell with pride of wealth and the pride of a secret well-kept when Eugénie wonders whether anyone else in France could have had such a fortune as her uncle, who had just lost the whole of his four millions. It indicates Grandet's annoyance when the arrival of the des Grassins, father and son, interrupts a conversation during which he was cleverly beguiling the lawyer Cruchot to serve his ends; and another of its movements at the end of the same scene marks the double game he is playing with Cruchot and des Grassins. It may be that its movement was involuntary, and it would have betrayed Grandet time and again if his fellow-townsmen had been skilled to read the signs that were plain to see. But they were not trained to observe, and so on every occasion they missed valuable information. One might wonder further: does the wen betray his thought? or is it his safety-valve, the expression of the cleverness that must otherwise be hidden, his exultation at having triumphed over his dupes?

But one day he over-estimated the blindness of his antagonist. One day Madame Grandet, in a crisis of extreme urgency, had a flash of insight that prevented her from betraying to Grandet the dreadful secret that Eugénie had given her store of gold

² Though Balzac nowhere asserts that it does, the reader is intuitively aware that it can.

coins to her cousin. Grandet had set a trap for his wife. He had assumed an air of joviality, had announced that he would not eat Eugénie even if she had given Charles the gold, that Charles was far away and could not be pursued over the sea. . . . Madame Grandet is on the point of confessing to Grandet that what he suspects is true, when "un mouvement terrible de la loupe de son mari" makes her aware of the trap, and she saves Eugénie by changing the course of her sentence and uttering the one lie of her life. The Cruchots were clever men – a successful lawyer, a wily churchman – and Madame Grandet was a poor broken-spirited creature. But she, because she had lived so long with Grandet and lived so long in the fear of him, had studied his every feature and was sensitive to the smallest change in his countenance; she alone could interpret the wen, and thus Grandet's horrid deception was brought to nothing.

It is not surprising that the wen plays its part in the scene of Grandet's death. Its animation at the sight of the Church's gold and silver vessels and candlesticks serves to anticipate the dying miser's last frantic movement, to clutch at and possess the gold of the crucifix.

It may or may not be fanciful to look back into the warts and wens of history for some ancestor of the wen on Grandet's nose. Balzac would never avoid the appearance of classical erudition, and one of his known methods of making his characters true to life was to give them some trait that had once belonged to some authentic human being, past or present. It may well be that not a great one of antiquity, but someone in Saumur, or in Paris, or elsewhere – Balzac's range is extensive and his eye ever watchful – had had such a wen as Grandet's, just as old Nivellean the usurer had had Grandet's millions and more. His fortune was talked of through all the region of the Loire, he had acquired, in 1820, a splendid castle in the neighbourhood of Saumur, and his daughter had married into the nobility after her father's death. Balzac quotes this old rogue's fortune, and invites those who said he had exaggerated Grandet's wealth beyond all probability, to go to Saumur and check the figures for themselves. It was on this occasion that he asked: "Voulez-vous que je sois plus vrai que la réalité?" He also quotes the retail grocer of Tours who had eight millions, and Monsieur Eynard the hawker who kept thirteen millions in gold in his house, and converted them by a clever stroke of investment to twenty millions. Bal-

zac nevertheless offers to diminish Grandet's fortune by six millions, to make it not more true but more probable."

Most often, then, he composes his characters from his own observations, but it is not foreign to his method to go further back in time to find a distinguished man to stand godfather to the child of his invention. He says of Grandet: "Il ne faisait jamais de bruit, et semblait économiser tout, même le mouvement," and he finds it worth while to elaborate this sentence in the description of another celebrated miser of the *Comédie Humaine*, Gobseck, and Gobseck in the same breath is compared to Fontenelle: "Si vous touchez un cloporte cheminant sur un papier, il s'arrête et fait le mort; de même, cet homme s'interrompait au milieu de son discours et se taisait au passage d'une voiture, afin de ne pas forcer sa voix. A l'imitation de Fontenelle, il économisait le mouvement vital, et concentrait tous les sentiments humains dans le moi."⁴ Balzac avoids stating definitely that Fontenelle was as sparing of his voice as Gobseck, but the detail is fantastic enough to belong to real life, where, as Balzac says in *Les Paysans*, the strangest circumstances are accepted by virtue of the simple fact that they occurred.

But if Gobseck is compared to Fontenelle, why was Grandet not compared to l'abbé Dubois, if indeed it is to Saint-Simon's account of him that Balzac is indebted for Grandet's stammer? The twitching wen and the assumed stammer are Grandet's most striking personal characteristics. Whether the movement of the wen was or was not voluntary we shall probably never know. The stammer was voluntary, and purposeful, and frequently successful. It is mentioned less frequently than the wen, probably for the practical reason that the movement of the wen can be indicated in one phrase, while the stammering speech is laboriously written out and becomes monotonous and tiresome to read; but the wen is its customary accompaniment, it constantly twitches immediately after a bout of stammering, very likely to indicate a bedevilled satisfaction.

Grandet's use of the stammer will be remembered by all readers. When he wished to avoid committing himself too far, or to wear down an opponent's patience, he assumed this stammer, and Balzac suggests that the reader believe that he copied it from a Jew who had once tricked him by putting on both

³ Letter (CXXI) to Zulma Carnaud, December 1833 (*Correspondance*, ed. Calmann Lévy, I, 264).

⁴ *Gobseck* (ed. Conard), V, 383, 4.

stammering and deafness. "Jadis, malgré toute sa finesse, il avait été dupé par un Israélite qui, dans la discussion, appliquait sa main à son oreille, en guise de cornet, sous prétexte de mieux entendre, et baragouinait si bien en cherchant ses mots que Grandet, victime de son humanité, se crut obligé de suggérer à ce malin Juif les mots et les idées que paraissait chercher le Juif, d'achever lui-même les raisonnements dudit Juif, de parler comme devait parler le damné Juif, d'être enfin le Juif et non Grandet."⁵ Can this be true? or was this Jew of fiction hastily improvised? and if so, why was he so? How can he stand up against l'abbé Dubois according to Saint-Simon? Saint-Simon is not an author frequently mentioned by Balzac, and literary coincidences stranger than this are vouched for by honourable men. Flaubert writes to Louise Colet: "Je suis dans ce moment tout épouvanté, et si je t'écris, c'est peut-être pour ne pas rester seul avec moi, comme on allume une lampe la nuit quand on a peur . . ." He had discovered in *Le Médecin de Campagne*, a novel which he had not read before composing *Madame Bovary*, a scene identical with one of his own in that novel, and of which he says, "Ce sont mêmes détails, mêmes effets, même intention, à croire que j'ai copié, si ma page n'était pas infiniment mieux écrite, sans me vanter."

But to return to l'abbé Dubois, Saint-Simon's paragraph reads startlingly like a suggestion for the stammering trick of Grandet:

"Il aurait parlé avec grâce et facilité, si, dans le dessein de pénétrer les autres en parlant, la crainte de s'avancer plus qu'il ne voulait ne l'avait accoutumé à un bégayement factice qui le déparait, et qui, redoublé quand il fut arrivé à se mêler de choses importantes, devint insupportable et quelquefois inintelligible."⁶

But perhaps after all it is better to suppose the coincidence and to conclude in favour of the Jew. Is it likely that Balzac would have avoided displaying his knowledge of Saint-Simon's text if he had indeed possessed it?

Once, under another guise, Balzac himself treats the question of sources, writing to Madame Hanska in January 1833:

"Vous voulez savoir si j'ai rencontré Foedora, si elle est vraie? Une femme de la froide Russie, la princesse Bagration, passe à Paris pour être modèle. J'en suis à la soixante-douzième femme

⁵ *Eugénie Grandet* (ed. Conard), VIII, 378.

⁶ Sketch of l'abbé Dubois, contained in the Portrait of the Duc d'Orléans, (the syntax is Saint-Simon's), ed. Chéruef, XI, 165ff.

qui a eu l'impertinence de s'y reconnaître. Elles sont toutes d'un âge mûr. Madame Récamier elle-même a voulu se foedoriser. Rien de tout cela n'est vrai. J'ai fait Foedora de deux femmes que j'ai connues sans être entré dans leur intimité. L'observation m'a suffi, outre quelques confidences.

"Il y a aussi de bonnes âmes qui veulent que j'aie courtoisé la plus belle des courtisanes de Paris, et que je me sois caché dans ses rideaux. Ce sont des calomnies.

"J'ai rencontré une Foedora, mais celle-là je ne la peindrai pas; et alors il y avait longtemps que la *Peau de Chagrin* avait paru."⁷

As this is apparently an answer to a question, and most probably a jealous question, from Madame Hanska, it may, as an answer, be entirely false. Yet it shows Balzac half amused, half irritated by critics who were so eagerly concerned in these matters. Such speculations nevertheless, on the various hints that may have been picked up here and there in reality or literature, and have gone to make up a memorable character, continue to be fascinating, and are perhaps not entirely unprofitable.

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⁷ *Lettres à l'Etrangère* (ed. Calmann Lévy), I, 9.

A CRISIS IN HUMANISM IN POST-WAR GERMAN WRITING?

German literature up to the present day has been characterized by a high degree of intellectual and philosophical content. It has faithfully reflected from Lessing on the optimistic strains of the Enlightenment, the belief in the perfectibility of man. Goethe's *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister*, Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, George's *Maximin* and Rilke's *Orpheus* are variations on the theme to what heights man can climb. It may be said that the last three took the wrong turning at some stage and that their *Ueberschenschentum* had nothing to do with the perfected *Menschentum* of *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister*. This is a debatable point and Thomas Mann has a lot to say on this in his *Dr. Faustus*, especially in connection with *Faust*. But *Faust*, *Wilhelm Meister*, *Zarathustra*, *Maximin* and *Orpheus* have this in common, that they cannot go wrong in their self-sufficiency. Their dark urges and a breezy dynamism lead them the right way in the long run. They and their creators can get along without certain basic concepts of Christianity, such as original sin and sin in general, which imply at least the possibility of failure.

Contemporary German literature presents a somewhat different picture. The majority of Germans today are certainly conscious of failure, they know that things can go wrong and have gone wrong, that *Ueberschenschentum* and hybris have had their share in bringing about Germany's sorry plight; they know that evil is a bitter reality and not necessarily a stepping stone to good. There is a big bulk of literature that describes the chaos, the atmosphere of dead cities, the derangements in the physical, intellectual and religious world. It is a relatively easy task to do this, and writers like Hermann Kasack and Wolfgang Borchert achieve impressive works. A great number of smaller authors have suddenly become very interested in Kafka, without having his talent and doing full justice to his ideas. They all dwell only on the dismal and sordid aspects of the German scene.

But I do not want to touch on this type of literature here. I should like to survey four responsible writers of high literary standing and popularity whose works seem to me to mirror faithfully the more deep-seated disillusionment and resignation, the fears and hopes of their age. The first two are Ernst Wiechert and Hans Carossa, who were nurtured in the pre-war

humanist tradition indicated above. The other two are Elisabeth Langgässer and Werner Bergengruen, who as Christians, would declare, to use Hans Egon Holthusen's words, "dass christliches Denken die Rolle des Aufklärers übernehmen muss in einer von vielen heidnischen Ideologien, Philosophemen und Hirn-gespinsten verdunkelten Welt."

Ernst Wiechert and Hans Carossa, though they did not leave Germany, were never in sympathy with the Nazi regime. Wiechert was directly drawn into the nightmare of concentration camps, and his accounts of his experiences at Buchenwald in his *Totenwald* (1945) will remain as a timeless memorial to the suffering of millions. His other two postwar works *Die Jerominkinder* (1945) and *Missa sine Nomine* (1950) are versions of the traditional German *Bildungsroman*. Jons Ehrenreich Jeromin, who from his youth is destined to become a clergyman so that he can bring justice into the world, becomes gradually disillusioned in his school years and specially in the first world war, studies medicine after the war and returns to his native village to look after the poor. Compassion and service to humanity also form the central theme of *Missa sine Nomine* which has the second world war as its background. The comparison between the *Missa solemnis* and the *Missa sine Nomine* forces itself upon one's mind. The lesson in both novels is that of *Wilhelm Meister*. Both works as well as his *Totenwald* reveal Wiechert's own disillusionment with his once held religious convictions. Jons finally wants to fight against "die Dämonen des Hasses, der Lüge, der Opferung, der Angst, der Rache." "Dieser Kampf bringt keine Belohnung, weder im Diesseits noch in einem erträumten Jenseits" and we read further "Wer diesen Kampf auskämpft, ist kein Soldat Gottes, sondern ein Soldat der Menschheit." The evil that Wiechert witnessed in Buchenwald had made him lose his faith in a benevolent God, and in an orderly creation. Johannes notes shortly after his arrival in that concentration camp "wie durch das Bild Gottes ein Sprung hindurchlief, der nicht mehr heilen würde." The bestialities of concentration camps are laid at God's feet, and not heaped on the heads of individuals who acted criminally and against the will of God. God and his creation are found wanting and not the individual man.

Wiechert's prestige among all opponents of Nazism was very high in Germany and abroad before and during the last war. Few had his courage in castigating in public acts of Nazi bar-

barism. Strangely enough his popularity in Germany vanished quickly after the war. It is hard to account for this. Possibly disillusionment and resignation are too passive states and not good enough for people who look for a way out. Wiechert died, a broken-hearted man, in 1950.

Carossa's *Ungleiche Welten* (1951) could run as a parallel account to Wiechert's post-war works, with this difference that Carossa never broke officially with the Nazi government, and he was therefore spared the physical tortures that Wiechert had to endure. As *Ungleiche Welten* shows he did not however escape mental scruples and torment. The work is an apologia for himself and for those who reproached him for not leaving Germany and for having accepted the position of president of the Nazi-sponsored European writers' association. At the beginning of the book Carossa says that he was slow to realize the true nature of Nazism, and he has explanations for this which in some cases make uncomfortable reading. However Carossa's standing enabled him to help many friends who would have otherwise suffered more through Nazism, for instance, Alfred Mombert. There is an air of uneasiness and strain in the book which even Carossa's urbanity and polished language cannot dispel. Over the events of the war and over the post-war scene in his appended story "Ein Tag im Spätsommer 1947" he pours out the mild lights of a setting sun. More than any other present German writer Carossa has moulded himself on Goethe. In Goethe's defence he speaks fighting words against Karl Jaspers, who in his *Unsere Zukunft und Goethe* had attacked Goethe for his lack of tragic sense and a proper appreciation of evil.

Zu dem Vielen, was die Gegenwart an ihm bemängelt, gehört auch dies, dass er uns das Böse, das in unserer Zeit so teuflische Formen angenommen hat, nicht in seiner ganzen Schwere und Schwärze entgegen hält. In der Tat, er überschritt weder als Bildner noch als Mensch die Grenzen, innerhalb derer er wahrhaft geistig bleiben konnte. Seine Natur baute sich aus den verschiedenartigsten Elementen auf; in allen seinen hohen Stunden aber überwog das Astrale, das der Kern seines Wesens war, und dieses verlieh oft seinem schlichtesten Wort, seinem einfachsten Vers eine metaphysische Schwingung, die wir bei keinem andern spüren. Dieses liebeich Sternenhafte legt ihm aber eine Enthaltung auf, die heute mancher zu tadeln wagt, indem er urteilt, Goethe sei dem Tragischen ausgewichen. . . .

Gewiss haben Kant, Schopenhauer und neuere Denker dem

Dämonischen und Bösen im Labyrinth der Menschenbrust mehr Aufmerksamkeit zugewendet; nur hat keiner von ihnen eines jener Lieder gedichtet, die bis zum Ende der Tage den denkenden, fühlenden, strebenden Menschen erleuchten, ermutigen und beflügeln werden.

To what extent Jaspers' attack on Goethe is justified we cannot examine here. Carossa is right when he says that Goethe did neither as artist nor as human being go beyond the limits, "innerhalb derer er wahrhaft geistig bleiben könnte." But the demonic forces that could be kept at bay in Goethe's time can now break down the protective barriers of the individual. Dictatorship and war in our age are total, and the demons are with us. On what allies can the individual count in this apparently uneven struggle?

It is here that the Christian writer gives again expression to his faith in God and His grace springing basically from a feeling of insufficiency and humility as a created being. This feeling of human insufficiency is the basic theme in the works of Langgässer and Bergengruen, and their message, despite an excessive dwelling on the baser and tragic aspects of human life, ultimately radiates hope, not despair.

Elisabeth Langgässer's sizeable novel *Das unauslöschliche Siegel* (1946) was one of the best sellers in Germany after the war. The sacrament of baptism, the indelible seal, makes Bellefontaine break with his former life. A consciousness of his own weakness dawns in him only after a long story of self-indulgence and filth, which shocked many German readers. The epilogue to that novel written in the form of an unusual dramatic chorus "highlights" the problem to which every modern humanism must find an answer: the persecution of Jews and any individuals whom a dictatorship may proclaim undesirable. That the *Unauslöschliche Siegel* owes a debt to Bernanos and especially to *Sous le soleil de Satan* does not detract from its value. Elisabeth Langgässer's second post-war novel *Märkische Argonautenfahrt* (1950) tells the story of seven survivors from the last war. "Flash-backs" to the war, descriptions of post-war destruction, black market practices and the pathetic story of two parentless children are interwoven with an account of the spiritual pilgrimage of seven members of the upper middle class and aristocracy to the convent Anastasiendorf, symbol of peace and personal fulfilment. Those who are baffled by Elisabeth Langgässer's works may find in her *Geist in den Sinnen behaust*,

(1951) a collection of short stories, essays and poems, some elucidation of apparently incongruous elements in her art. This collection was made after Elisabeth Langgässer's death in 1950 by her husband, Wilhelm Hoffmann, a philosopher in his own right who was trained by Heidegger. In a postscript to this work by Herr Hoffmann we read in connection with the *Unauslöschliche Siegel*:

Zu dem Bild vom Menschen bei Elisabeth Langgässer gehört es auch, dass die Grunderfahrung seiner Wirklichkeit aus dem Glauben kommt. Daher steht bei ihr nicht die Vernunft gegen den christlichen Glauben, sondern eine Möglichkeit des Glaubens gegen eine andere: der Glaube an die Vernunft gegen den christlichen Glauben. Die christliche Situation sah sie durch diese Doppelgläubigkeit charakterisiert, durch den hoffnungslosen Versuch, den Glauben an die Vernunft im Sinne der Aufklärung zugleich mit dem Glauben an Christus zu verbinden. Bellefontaine im *Unauslöschlichen Siegel* ist der Exponent dieser Haltung und scheitert wie alle, die den gleichen Weg gehen.

In commenting on discussions on modern science, particularly physics, biology and psychology that take place in *Märkische Argonautenfahrt* Herr Hoffmann says that they revolve round the central theme: "Ist eine dieser Wissenschaften in der Lage . . . die menschliche Existenz in ihrem Wesen zu bestimmen?" And the answer and a summing up of Elisabeth Langgässer's credo in the following passage:

Doch nur dann, wenn sie sich usurpierend zum Wesen des Daseins selbst erhoben hatte! Anders gewendet: wenn eine dieser Disziplinen, ihre Grenzen überschreitend, den Glauben an den Menschen in seiner menschlichen Möglichkeit bestimmen zu können vermeinte. Welcher Glaube ist heute noch dem Menschen glaubbar? Dass diese Frage möglich war, erschien ihr als das positive Moment in der Dunkelheit und Leere der Situation. Die Ursprünglichkeit des Glaubens an den Menschen lässt sich nach Elisabeth Langgässer nicht durch ein Vertrauen auf die Leistung der Wissenschaften, der Philosophie, der Kunst, der Politik und ihrer Programme, der Wirtschaft, der Gesellschaft gewinnen. Denn sie selbst sind konkrete Möglichkeiten des Menschen, bestimmen aber nicht das Wesen seiner Menschlichkeit. Das Vertrauen in die Wissenschaften entspringt der Torsohaftigkeit des Daseins und spricht nur seine Leere aus. Das Mass der ursprünglichen Geschichte des Menschen bei Elisabeth Langgässer war das des Glaubens: *lex orandi est lex credendi*.

Elisabeth Langgässer's works will demand patient reading; structurally her two novels are interesting—she uses a jigsaw puzzle technique—their intellectual content is considerable, their artistic finish sometimes uneven.

Werner Bergengruen will satisfy the most fastidious reader with respect to form and polish. He is a storyteller par excellence. Psychological penetration, skill in building up a sense of the impending, a great interest in history coupled with the knowledge of a scholar in that field characterize Bergengruen's novels. His viewpoint is always *sub specie aeternitatis*. In a recent statement Bergengruen outlines his aims in this way:

Fragt man mich nach meinem erzählerischen Kredo, so möchte ich nicht die Aufgaben des Epikers schlechthin, wohl aber die mir persönlich als Epiker und insbesondere als Novelisten gewiesenen Aufgaben folgendermassen kennzeichnen: Ohne das Typische menschlicher Zusammenhänge, den grossen Gemeinschaftshintergrund aller Erzählerkunst je aus dem Auge zu verlieren, soll die Erzählung handlungsmässig vom ausserordentlichen Ereignis ausgehen, wie es alle ursprüngliche Fabulierkunst von ihren ersten Anfängen an getan hat. Unter dem ausserordentlichen Ereignis verstehe ich in diesem Zusammenhang nicht das Sensationelle, Willkürliche und womöglich gar vom Zufall Getragene, sondern das aus der Menge der Geschehnisse durch Bewegung, Reichtum und Steigerung der Lebensgefühle Hinausragende. Es gilt also die Darstellung und Deutung des Einmaligen, des Einzelfalles. Aber wie ich die Welt nur als eine Einheit zu empfinden vermag, so ist mir auch der Einzelfall, und sei es der abenteuerlichste und scheinbar isolierteste, nichts als die Manifestation ewig gültiger Gesetze, und deren Offenbarwerden, nicht deren vordringliche Predigt, das, was ich als *metaphysische Pointe* bezeichnen möchte, scheint mir denn auch den Kern jeder erzählenden Kunst zu bilden.

Of the novels that secure Bergengruen a place among great German prose writers I should like to mention three: *Der Grosse Tyrann und das Gericht* (1935), *Am Himmel wie auf Erden* (1940) and *Das Feuerzeichen* (1949). As can be seen from the above statement by Bergengruen the extraordinary event usually provides the starting point for his stories and because of this it brings his novels sometimes close to the German Novelle. In *Der Grosse Tyrann und das Gericht* the author wants to tell us of temptations to which we are all subject.

Es ist in diesem Buche zu berichten von den Versuchungen der Mächtigen und von der Leichtverführbarkeit der Unmächtigen und Bedrohten. Es ist zu berichten von unterschiedlichen Geschehnissen in der Stadt Cassano, nämlich von der Tötung eines und von der Schuld aller Menschen. Und es soll davon auf eine solche Art berichtet werden, dass unser Glaube an die menschliche Vollkommenheit eine Einbusse erfahre. Vielleicht, dass an seine Stelle ein Glaube an des Menschen Unvollkommenheit tritt; denn in nichts anderem kann ja unsere Vollkommenheit bestehen als in eben diesem Glauben (in the preamble).

The murder, the extraordinary event of the story, is the deed of the tyrant himself, but nevertheless he orders an investigation into the crime which soon comes to lie over the city like a poisonous cloud, owing to the brutal methods of the tyrant's henchmen and the fears and lies of those who are suspected though really innocent. In the end an insignificant little man, the dyer Sperone, in order to rid the town of the persecutions and the tension that blights its life, confesses that he has committed the murder. At this point the tyrant confesses in public to the deed, moved by the intended heroic sacrifice of Sperone, who was prepared to die even for him. This novel was a disguised attack on Nazi rule but also bore witness to the fears, entanglements and guilt of the average individual citizen. In 1937 Bergengruen was expelled from Goebbels' *Reichsschrifttumskammer*.

In *Am Himmel wie auf Erden* the theme is somewhat similar to that outlined in the preamble to *Der Grosstyrann und das Gericht*, but the event that motivates the story is a flood that had been forecast for the year 1524. The elector Joachim of Brandenburg shares with only a few others the knowledge that this flood will come, and he is careful in keeping any consciousness of the impending disaster away from the inhabitants of Berlin and Kölln, over whom he rules. He is not sure that they will not flee and panic in the face of this danger. But he confides his secret to the chamberlain Ellnhofen, of whose loyalty he feels certain. Yet Ellnhofen is the first to take counter-measures against this disaster. He brings his bride to safety. Having abused the Elector's confidence he is condemned to death and executed. Then it is the Elector's turn to be subjected to temptations and even he succumbs in the end. He flees to a mountain where he hopes to survive the flood. Realizing however the unworthy example he sets to his people he returns to the city.

Besides the Elector the court astronomer Carion faces consciously up to the danger. They are rewarded for their courage when the flood comes. The towns of Berlin and Kölln are severely damaged but they survive. The metaphysical point of the work seems to be that all human life is constantly endangered and that it is only too easy to do wrong. We read: "Der Stein wird von keinem Winde bewegt, denn er ist tot. Das Lebende aber ist gefährdet und schwach. Nur das Erstarrte ist sicher in sich selbst." "Das Kennzeichen des Lebendigen ist seine Bedrohtheit."

Bergengruen's last novel *Das Feuerzeichen* reminds one of Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas*. The hero of the story, Herr Hahn, is a farmer who runs a summer guest house on the Baltic as a side line. On a tempestuous day he rescues a party of his guests only by lighting, under great difficulties, a mighty fire on the dunes to serve as a beacon to a safe anchorage. Soon afterwards he receives a notice from the provincial Law Courts that he had broken the law in lighting an unauthorized fire on the Baltic coast, and had thereby endangered shipping by providing a potentially misleading signal. Herr Hahn is stunned by this news. What everyone had considered an unselfish act cannot possibly be a crime. He consults a lawyer and is told that the law has to take notice of his offence, but that he would surely be acquitted. The whole matter was only a formality. But Hahn cannot see that he should be acquitted if he is not really guilty. From this point Hahn's fate attracts attention far and wide. Everybody is on his side. It is here that Hahn succumbs to arrogance and pride. He writes letters to the papers, takes the law into his own hands in trying to short-circuit the normal workings of law courts, gradually alienates more and more of his supporters and finally stands alone. The legal proceedings against him move slowly but steadily. The day for the lawsuit is fixed. Hahn has already announced that he will not appear in court and commits suicide by setting fire to his house. Self-righteousness is the real cause of Hahn's downfall. Psychologically this novel is extremely well handled, as Hahn is a very sane and lovable person at the beginning of the story.

Bergengruen never dwells on the didactic aspects of his stories: the lessons are implied. He points to humility as the "core" virtue in man, a welcome change in German literature, which has so many *Uebermenschen*.

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THE ART OF HENRI BOSCO

France is rooted deep in the Mediterranean world. Its antiquity and its sunshine, its gods and its heroes, its order and its clarity always pressed upon the Celtic or Gothic world, and compelled from many a northern Renan the tribute of a "Prayer on the Acropolis". From Fouquet to Poussin and Ingres, from Montaigne and Ronsard to Chateaubriand, the South was constantly a place of pilgrimage, whose warmth and light quickened Northern minds to deeper insights, and passed on to Paris the heritage of Rome and Athens. Over the last century alone there have sprung up from the ancient soil of Provence and Languedoc men like Mistral and Paul Arène, Daudet and Maurras, Valéry and Giono—writers to whose native classicism the great sun seems to have imparted joy, and strength, and often tranquillity, a luminous quality of mind. Among this company it is strange to find a man of shadows and darkness.

Henri Bosco, who sprang into fame in 1945 with his *Mas Théotime*, is one of the most haunting of present-day French novelists. It is the very undertones in his work, the lack of Cézanne quality in his landscapes, that make him so inescapable. Not that his books lack strength: on the contrary, Bosco's Provence is a land of brooding midsummer heat and storm, and his characters creatures of passion and violence. But the strength is a contained strength, pent up and menacing. Action is phenomenally slow, and dialogue hardly ever breaks in: visible forms are subordinated to invisible by the dominion of the dark, which is peopled with presences that can only be sensed. Taciturn hill-men move noiselessly in and out of the action, birds and beasts pulsate in harmony or in conflict with natural man, and bygone time is perpetually bursting in from beyond death and forcing the citadel of the present. Over everything hangs the elemental stillness that is the characteristic dimension of Bosco's work—a voiceless, tenantless quiet, that is not really without form and void, but eager and alive with intimations of immortality or frustrations of mortality, with hope or grief, with heartache or heart's desire. And the good earth, with its ageless rhythms of sunshine and harvest, of summer and winter, of cold and heat, brings blessed sanity and forgetfulness to beings forspent with struggle against either the quick or the dead.

Bosco himself is a Southerner, born at Avignon in 1888, and has throughout his career lived in the Mediterranean world. His

native heath is the dry windswept hill country of Provence, whose every mood he learned to feel and love as a boy. The Cézanne country east of Aix, or the slopes of Mt. Lubéron beside the Durance, would seem to be his chosen domain, though he sets one very powerful novel, *Malicroix*, in the bleak plain of the Camargue. As novel after novel shows, his is no superficial tourist knowledge, compounded of rosemary and olive trees and almond blossom. Provence is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Its harsh and violent moods, in times of storm, he can interpret as feelingly as its cosy, intimate warmth when the sun inherits the earth. Its ancient myths and lore, its cults and gods and superstitions, encounter in him no amused modern sceptic, but a votary. Its peasants, as expansive and mercurial as its hillmen are laconic, are, under his pen, no mere creatures of literature, but solid and real. Its landscape, bleached and ravaged by the *mistral*, or fragrant and fruitful under the sheltering uplands, is as intrinsic to him as the air he breathes. And he is, like Giono, a born observer—not only of cloud and wind, of hillside and plain, but of boars and foxes, wood-doves and jays and hawks. He himself admits that while in Italy he made a prolonged study of St. Francis of Assisi: he moves quite familiarly, as one belonging there, in the animal world. One evidence of that is his alertness to olfactory sensation: time and time again, an unseen; unheard watcher in the dark, he notes the passage of a fox, or the crushing of lavender or wild thyme by a roaming hoof, the scent of spring water in the scrub, or the dry, crackling sensation of an approaching storm. Indeed, there is a deeper sensory level—his very over-use of the word “vibrations” suggests it—at which the visible and invisible worlds impinge on each other: intuitions of danger come inexplicably, ancestral promptings guide an anguished conscience, a solitary, if he be sib, communes with the soul of an old, old house, and men wield mysterious powers over birds and beasts. Bosco even leaves one with the impression that the great god Pan is not dead, nor yet the Earth Mother Demeter, and that in this ancient Latin province the temptation survives to surrender individuality to the slow rhythm of universal life and merge in things. Only a Provençal and a man of the open air could write so.

His constant symbol is the empty house, itself a recollection of the great fourteen-roomed house in which, not without fear and trembling, he was left alone on occasion by his parents when he was a boy. For Bosco, as for Estaunié, “les choses voient”, a

house is a personality. Even the names he gives his houses – Les Ramades, La Commanderie, Théotime, La Redousse, Loselée, – seem evocative of past tradition or experience. Each house, through its foundations in rock or clay, seems to commune still with the vanished ages of earth, and draws strength from the deep places, while its stone drinks in the inexhaustible energy of the sun. Its timbers and tiles strain creakingly to the familiar rhythms of wind and storm, while its hearth cherishes the remembered presence of those who fell on sleep. A friendly, human shelter by the light of day, it inherits by night the kingdoms of the dead. Yet Bosco would not have it otherwise. He hovers, a reverent, unobtrusive tenant, on the verge of this limbo, chooses his own narrow confine – one single room in an echoing emptiness – and lets the departed have their will of the place. Within these bounds the most intimate sanctum is the attic: encumbered with the untroubled litter of generations, this grey, dusty frontier-land between human habitation and the elements gathers up in itself all the mystery of the house, and yields it up only to those who come humbly, feelingly, in search of past time.

Bosco's kingdom, moreover, is the dark. Not that he shuns the daylight: every good Southerner loves the world of plastic forms, and there is a warm, sunny quality about his writing when he calls up the little hillside garden "Fleuriade" (in *L'Ane Culotte*), or turns from the savage strength of the Rhône to the bee-hives and apricot blossoms of Le Castellet (in *Mali-croix*). But there is no mystery in daylight, and mystery lies at the very centre of Bosco's art. Even Corot's domain of daybreak and twilight holds less resource for him than the great dark (Péguy himself viewed Night as the beloved firstborn of God). Bosco moves in this dimension, not always without fear – primitive man dies hard in us – but strongly, firmly, an eager listener. Whether his night be that of an unlit house or that, more eerie, of an old ship rotting in the docks, the murk of a pine forest or the gloom that blankets the hills before a storm, he strides unhesitatingly into it, with no lantern to guide his feet, either. Yet his approach to darkness has none of Shelley's wistfulness nor the devout calm of Henry Vaughan: there is a masculine, questing quality about it, as well as an immense passivity, an inexhaustible patience. Bosco's heroes – he writes mostly in the first person – are men who can wait: all action, all speech suspended, they pass hours and hours in the utter dark, starved of visual

impressions, but keenly alive to sounds and scents and presences, mercilessly intent on wresting from the unseen its secrets (for, like Walter de la Mare's "phantom listeners", they make no sign when there comes a knock at the door, nor do they even heed calls for help, voiced or unvoiced, from Hyacinthe or Geneviève or Clotilde). They can act violently, with reckless courage, if minded to, but more impressive than this physical action is their cruel immobility—their sovereign weapon against the night. As an observer Bosco has most uncanny insights: as vividly as a man born blind, he can sense the tired bubbling of a parched summer spring, the distant passing of a boar on the hills, the rise of the sap in trees and grass, and the strange currents of life that stir in leaves and birds and beasts when the moon is rising. The dark is an open book to him—not always easy to read, but compelling, imperious, irresistible.

There is, of course, the recurrent theme of the lamp, natural enough to a man whose protagonists are men of books and letters—the ancient religious symbol of the lamp. This flicker of life in the all-enveloping dark does not always signify a human presence: on occasion Bosco's heroes prefer to sit in the dark in an empty house, or else they leave the lamp lighted at an attic window, and go a-roaming. In *Hyacinthe* the light of La Géneste spells pious vigil—a lamp lit on the altar of memory, kept trimmed and burning till someone loved and lost elects to return home. Here and there, too, an altar lamp tended by unknown hands keeps alive in some abandoned village church the ministries of the unseen world. But the lamp, by its very frailty, emphasizes the immense darkness around it. Its tiny finger of flame holds back the gloom for a short season—no more: it is a symbol, not of radiant triumph, but of watchfulness, of anguished expectancy. It lights no distant scene, but only a precarious circle of mortality.

The most moving motif of all is the Garden. This is a not infrequent image in Eastern thought, and in Holy Writ it is given deeply significant associations in the Creation of the world, the Song of Songs, the Passion in Gethsemane and the resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene. It haunts the medieval poets, from Baudry of Bourgueil to Charles of Orléans, and the miniaturists revert to it constantly. "L'amour de moy," sang the unknown fifteenth century bard, "s'y est enclose dedans ung joli jardin." In the work of Bosco the Garden occupies somewhat the same place as the Graal in the literature of chivalry—it is

the lost Eden, the dwelling place of primal innocence, of harmony between man and beast, the veriest abode of peace. And it is set, not across perilous seas forlorn, but in Provence, – just as Alain-Fournier set his “domaine mystérieux”, not in the mind’s eye only, but in Sologne. In *L’Ane Culotte* the Garden is a sunny little pocket in the hills, fed by hidden springs, and tended by the old nature-mystic, M. Cyprien, who has learnt in the South Seas the art of charming birds and beasts, and grants all creatures sanctuary in his orchard “Fleuriade”. The little *mas* has become for him the earthly paradise, utterly Franciscan, – until its magic is destroyed by the shedding of blood, and fear, and the profaning of the orchard by the boy who is his heir designate in earth lore. So he burns down the orchard and abandons the place. The Garden appears again in the Hyacinthe trilogy, this time named “Silvacane”, and set in lonely, uninhabited hill country – the home of M. Cyprien and of the girl he has laid his spell upon, a place of unutterable quiet and peace, guarded once again by a serpent, – but somehow, mysteriously, not the habitat of natural innocence, nor really heart’s desire. In *Un Rameau de la nuit* the Garden is a refuge in the hills, a place of purity and peace, where time and space roll back, and thought ceases – a place of luminous calm and delight, (though, strangely, Bosco’s art seems less at home in edenic bliss than in tortured human life). Yet Fleuriade and Silvacane remain only a dream of the heart, only a cry of desire: God withholds Himself, and the real Eden – Gide would have understood this – remains impossible of attainment.

There is thus a genuine current of metaphysical thought running through Bosco’s work, though it is far from orthodoxy. Animism and local superstition bulk largely in it, although, mercifully, he avoids the sententious, dogmatic strain of some of Giono’s pre-war work. The primary element in it all appears to be Greek religious mystery: a forgotten altar to Pan appears in *Un Rameau de la nuit*, and in *Hyacinthe* there is a momentary glimpse of a small bull decked with garlands, associated with the fire worship of a band of gypsy nomads. Bosco himself admits that during his three years in Tuscany he delved deep into Pythagorean thought and the Eleusinian mysteries: he makes free use of these in his novels. The incantatory power of music, over both human beings and animals, the importance of catharsis and solitude, the transmigration of souls (palingenesis), the stress on the Earth Mother, whom to call upon releases

springs deep down in the earliest elements of life—all of these lend a mysterious immateriality to Bosco's Provence, and make him very much of a traveller from an antique land. Yet primitive Greek occultism seems oddly mingled with a type of esoteric Christianity: symbols like the dove, the Cross, the rose appear in *Mas Théotime*, and in the *Hyacinthe* novels pagan fire worship clings round altars dedicated to the Holy Spirit, while traditions from the Knights Templars crop up too. Undoubtedly Bosco exploits this vein with a purpose, and undoubtedly it adds to the suspense of his action. Whether it always carries conviction, without alienating the reader, is another question. *Mystère* can easily pass over into *mystification*. Yet this intensely vivid sense of the past, a very Mediterranean quality, lends novelty and strength to Bosco's work, and a certain metaphysical depth also.

One of the dominant notes in his recent work has been the persistence or re-emergence of personality, and the modes by which spirit communes with spirit across the barriers of time, or death, or absence. The strange, enigmatic tenant of La Commanderie, in *Hyacinthe*, would seem an objectification of Constantin Gloriot, and Maître Ratou (in *M. Carre-Benoît*) holds nightly converse with the deceased Hortense. Martial doggedly feels his way into the mind of his dead uncle Malicroix, while living in winter silence and seclusion on the island in the Rhône, and senses within himself, as does Pascal in *Le Mas Théotime*, the inveterate clash of bloods, the vendetta between sunlight and shadow, tranquillity and violence, love and hate. The most disturbing conflict of all is that which chooses for its battlefield the mind of Frédéric Meyrel (*Un Rameau de la nuit*): deep within himself there comes alive a different self, a man several years dead, whose look, whose habit of mind, whose power over the birds others who knew him can sense, especially the girl who loved him. The nightmare strain of it, of this grim, silent fight in the subterranean world of memory and desire, is one of the strangest things in fiction.

Individual preference is no real criterion of judgment, but there is a superbly epic strength in the long novel of 1948, *Malicroix*. A haunting story of the Camargue, set in a great watery world like Châteaubriant's *La Brière* and Giono's *Batailles dans la montagne*, this book achieves immensity and timelessness through its very simplicity, its starkness of outline. A solitary man, self-prisoned in an island in the Rhône in the midst of

winter, remote from books, mail, human contact (except for the taciturn old retainer who comes and goes invisibly), beset all round by the enormous river swollen with its winter floods, Martial finds himself bound in every fibre by the grim old hermit who had made him his heir, and feels within him a sombre heredity struggling with his tradition as a hillman. This Malicroix heredity requires only the Malicroix environment to leap into tenacity and violence, and into community of mood with a long lineage of men of silence and solitude. In a universe of reeds and waterfowl ravaged by perpetual wind, watched by cattlemen who are immemorial enemies of his clan, he sustains the long winter siege, and finally fulfils his dead forbear's charge, the violent gesture of reconciliation which effaces the past. The *dénouement* hardly matches the rest of the book, — climaxes are not Bosco's strong point — but the whole story leaves a bleak and indelible impression.

As Duhamel puts it, the novel is the heir to the epic poem, and it is possibly the poetic element in Bosco, his quality of creating myths, that will constitute his permanent title to fame. Like Alain-Fournier, he has a wonderful faculty for making poetry and prose cohabit the same tiny world: the transition from the familiar rustic scene to the domain of mystery is achieved almost without transition, so undefined are the frontier reaches of the visible. To achieve this delicate equilibrium of the commonplace and the marvellous, of the seen and the unseen, is of the very essence of poetry — and poetry is not one of the major qualities of the modern novel. Readers of Bosco will be grateful to a man who, by the very discreetness of an art matured in silence in the Greco-Latin world, by his recollections in tranquillity and his intimate communion with the realm of nature, has restored to the novel an unforced poetic unreality, and to human life something other than the grim patterns of the contemporary world.

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A CASE OF SUBJECTIVITY IN LITERARY HISTORY

It is a well-known fact that objective history as such does not exist, and that historical studies are always determined by the questions the historian asks the past. Especially when the historian does not limit himself to facts, but tries to give an interpretation of a past period, demonstrating causes and relations, it is unavoidable that his expositions are influenced by his views, feelings and ideals. This applies to the literary field not less than to the others.

The interpretation of the Golden Age of Dutch literature (about 1580-1680) by its admirers cannot but be influenced by their personal outlook. While working on the early period of German Baroque literature Erich Trunz came to the conclusion that it is not possible to deal with this period in German literature without taking Dutch literature of the time into account. As books in German on the subject were out-of-date and unsatisfactory, and he himself, as a lecturer in the Amsterdam University, was in a position to study it with some thoroughness, he published the result of his work in a booklet,¹ the interesting feature of which is its subjective interpretation of the Dutch Golden Age. The facts he gives concerning the influences exerted on German literature by Heinsius, Hooft and Vondel, and concerning the influence of Böhme on Dutch religious life, were fairly well known from various articles in Dutch and from the handbook of Dutch literary history by Jan Te Winkel. But Trunz wants to do more: he wants to analyse and to describe the difference between Dutch and German literatures of the time as the result of differing societies—he aims at a sociopsychological interpretation of literatures.

It is striking that German literature of the seventeenth century, generally speaking, was unimportant, and that a good national tradition came temporarily to an end, whereas Dutch literature of the period reached a peak. Dutch literature of the Golden Age was a good second to its painting, although it never gained such wide recognition, because of the very nature of its material: the Dutch language.

In looking for causes for this difference it is obvious that one has to consider the different political fortunes of the two coun-

¹ Erich Trunz: *Dichtung und Volkstum in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein Vergleich mit Deutschland und ein Ueberblick über die niederländisch-deutschen Beziehungen in diesem Jahrhundert* (München, 1937).

tries. For the Netherlands the successful 80-years war against Spain was most important. That war—a conservative war in many respects, as its aim was to preserve the traditional mediaeval freedoms against a centralizing monarch aiming at absolutism—created an independent republic, federal and very democratic judged by the standards of the time. It added considerably to the feeling of self-reliance in the community and created a race of mature citizens, prepared to accept and to carry responsibilities of a much wider scope than the mediaeval townsman had dreamt of. The boldness in seafaring and wars appeared in the artistic and intellectual fields as well, and blossomed in original creation.

In contrast with this Trunz concludes for Germany: "In der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts wurde in Deutschland solche Mündigkeit zerschlagen und damit das Lebensgefühl des freien Mannes" (p. 13).

He is undoubtedly right in this. It must be in national life as it is for the individual: difficulties successfully overcome fortify the character and heighten the energy, whereas slightly greater difficulties break and destroy the same possibilities elsewhere.

It is harder to agree as soon as details are discussed. In explaining the happy development of Dutch literature in the seventeenth century, Trunz gives much attention to the function of the "rederijderskamers",² societies that can be roughly compared with the German meistersinger organizations, but were much more widely spread and had full official recognition. In them learned and unlearned, the leading citizen and the anonymous small burgher, met and worked together. They brought education and modern ideas to the unlearned, and helped to preserve the national traditions and the feeling of community and fundamental equality in the cultural leaders, so that they did not become a separate class, but had living contact with the people and a large audience to write for. According to Trunz, the happy blending of national traditions and foreign Renaissance influences in Dutch literature was a result of its continuing to be rooted in the broader layers of the people.

In contrast with this Trunz sees communal life in Germany disrupted into groups round courts and universities, without contacts with the people. As a result Opitz accepted western

² "rederijker": Dutch popular etymology for French "rhétoricien".

humanism and foreign Renaissance forms, but he rejected the national traditions of the sixteenth century. German Baroque literature was the preserve of the learned, and had no substratum in the people. Of course the happy conjunction in the Low Countries did not last: by the end of the seventeenth century class distinctions in the Netherlands had widened, the natural individualism of the people was not counteracted any longer by strong communal institutions like the "rederijkerskamers", and the peak period of creativeness came to an end.

Official Dutch literary history does not stress the importance of the "rederijkerskamers" to such a degree, and I think it is right. One can easily agree that peaks of artistic creation normally rise out of a broad field of artistic activity. The famous Dutch painters are the best out of thousands and thousands of mediocre and sometimes bad painters. The best dramas in world literature emerge only from periods and societies with a strong theatrical life. Bach would be unthinkable without the active musical life in the German-speaking world of his time. In the same way the stimulating of interest in literature amongst wide groups of the population by the "rederijkerskamers" created a basis. But do they account for the quality of the works which we consider to be the lasting glory of Golden Age literature? Certainly not.

Most of the poetry that was popular in the seventeenth century we hardly think worth reading now. The productions of the "rederijkerskamers" are boring and only of historical interest. The works of Cats, once so popular, lost their appeal. In emblemata³ we are not interested. Collections of songs and drama from the burgher circles are, normally, singularly saltless. Those works, on the contrary, which we consider to be the best, were non-popular, and, answering Trunz, one could say that the greatest poetry, far from arising from popular societies, was written only because those poets had the daring to leave the "rederijkerskamers" and be their own non-popular selves. If Trunz thinks that those poets express the true self of the nation, the nation itself would certainly not have agreed. The same applies to painting: Rembrandt was popular only in his first period: several of his masterpieces were not accepted by those who ordered them. The popular painters were second-rate.

Trunz's high appreciation of the "rederijkerskamers" is in-

³ Picture-books with poetic moralizations.

fluenced by the nationalist and socialist complex of feelings prevailing in the Germany of the 'thirties. The ideal of a national community embracing all ranks in society, the almost religious veneration for the "people", the ideal of an art emanating from the "people" and expressing the deeper self, the genius of the "nation", leading in its extreme forms to damnation of "entartete Kunst" and to government-inspired creation of an immensely boring popular art—all this engendered in him an enthusiasm for the "rederijkerskamers" which they do not deserve at all. For great art it is not essential whether the centre of activity is a court, the Church, a university or a prosperous burgher community. Living contact with "the people", however desirable in itself, is no guarantee for masterpieces, and maybe sometimes it is even a hindrance. It is instructive to compare Trunz's idealization of Dutch society in the seventeenth century with a somewhat similar discussion of the Golden Age in Dutch historical literature itself. In 1934 Dr Jan Romein, now professor of history in Amsterdam University, published a history of the Low Countries, *De Lage Landen bij de Zee*, in which a few chapters are devoted to Dutch culture and civilization of the seventeenth century. Romein's approach is sociological too, but he was a Marxist at the time, obviously inspired by resentment against the well-situated middle-classes. His picture of the seventeenth century Dutch burgher is rather different from Trunz's. Whereas Trunz never ceases to stress the simplicity and honesty of the burgher and keeps underlining his feeling of unity with "the people", Romein states bluntly that the successful merchant, as soon as he became conscious of his power, did everything within his means to become a gentleman, a pseudo-nobleman, cutting the ties which bound his cultural life to the labour from which he lived. The well-to-do burghers were not able to refine and raise themselves without disavowing their true selves and becoming classicists. There was a deep cleft between their culture and the vital sources of popular language and popular life.

And yet, for all their differences, Romein and Trunz are of the same generation and are led by a similar longing: the romantic longing to see a really popular culture, born from and fed by a homogeneous unified society realized in history. Both express their profound admiration for the "geuzenliederen";⁴ Romein is moved by the fact that they rose from the

⁴ Mainly anonymous war-poetry directed against the Spaniards.

broad masses of the people, the German scholar by that and by their vigorous nationalism. Reading such works one feels how strongly historical studies are determined by the non-historical views and feelings of the authors, and how necessary it is to detect them.

It is to be expected that in future the growing feeling of European unity will be reflected in literary history too, in its underlining of the many and important common features in European culture, after Romanticism has done so much in demonstrating national peculiarities. The time has certainly come for that.

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ALTERNATIVE TO PHILOLOGY?

For language-teachers in general, but especially here in Australia, philology is like the pursuit of the Holy Grail. One is eternally tempted to go on and yet the goal seems to get no nearer. Year after year one starts the student off on his weary trail through the sloughs of sound-shifts, the scolding hills of etymologies and the vanity fair of paradigms and conjugations. Is it merely the weariness of the flesh that makes one ask whether this is serving any useful purpose? Or is it an uneasy feeling that the pioneer work of de Saussure, Meillet, Wartburg, Trier, Feist and Maurer is being ignored by Anglo-Saxon philologists? It was as long ago as 1905-6 that Meillet published in the *Année sociologique* his essay "Comment les mots changent de sens" in which he pointed out: "If the milieu in which language is evolving is a social milieu, if the object of language is to allow of social relations, if language is only maintained and preserved by these relationships, if finally the boundaries of languages tend to coincide with the boundaries of social groupings, then it is evident that the causes of linguistic facts must be of a social nature and that only the consideration of social facts will allow us to substitute for the scrutiny of crude facts the determination of processes." I should not like to vouch for the amount of "consideration of social facts" we bring into our everyday philology.

For this reason I have long been enthusiastic, in my own particular sphere, about one of the most valuable works I have seen since the war. Since I feel it has been almost entirely passed over by most philologists (there was only a very cursory review in *M.L.R.*), I make no apology for merely expounding in this place another scholar's views. The work in question is H. Maeder's *Versuch über den Zusammenhang von Sprachgeschichte und Geistgeschichte* (Zürich 1945).

Dr Maeder's thesis is a most valuable contribution to the modernization of Germanic philology. Like the growing body of "modern" neo-philologists, he condemns from the outset the way in which the nineteenth century philologists deformed their science in an over-enthusiastic attempt to equate its methodology with that of the natural sciences. This attempt led them merely to heap up phonological and other phenomena which could apparently be shown to demonstrate "logical" and "inevitable" (in any case, continuous) development (alias evolution). In the spirit of the Meillet quotation above, and taking examples

from two sermons by Berthold von Regensburg and Luther, he shows how the evolution of concepts and, consequently, of grammatical forms follows a *psychological pattern* which is historically conditioned.

Rejecting the ill-digested mass of unrelated evidence which has (still) to be taught as "Historical Grammar", Maeder goes to the heart of the matter by investigating precisely how Berthold and Luther envisaged *the subject-matter* of their sermons.

The sermons he takes as his material treat of the Passion. He analyses the treatment of the subject-matter and the reflections to which it gives rise, showing the immensely significant differences. Thus the Cross is for Berthold purely an aid to symbolical interpretation. Maeder demonstrates how Berthold maintains an attitude of sovereign detachment to his material, using all his words and phrases—down to the very rhythm of his oratory—to *teach* certain *lessons* to his unlettered congregation. Luther, on the other hand, uses the Passion as an event, which is used to speak to the *conscience* of the *individual*. For Berthold the Crucifixion is a succession of symbols, for Luther a succession of allegories. The stages of the Passion, the very arms of the Cross serve Berthold as objects (Maeder uses Berthold's word "dinc") whose contemplation may stimulate the faithful to carry out the preacher's orders. Luther, on the other hand, uses the *stages* of the Passion to achieve a change of heart in his listeners. He tries, not to order but to *persuade*: he desires not merely compliance but conversion.

Several things which emerge from this approach assume tremendous importance now. Berthold's *Verdinglichung* of his material is shown (with a wealth of syntactical evidence) to proceed from an approach which is entirely devoid of perspective. Luther, on the other hand, not only knows perspective but requires to use depth to *move* his audiences *internally*. Maeder shows how Luther's oratorical periods build up on the basis of the intention to arouse tension, thus stirring his hearers the more deeply.

One by-product of this reasoning is extremely significant. Since Luther bores within his subject he views external reality with mistrust. Hence he does not trust hearsay evidence, which, being composed of externals, is open to subjective errors:

The facts as handed down are bewilderingly inconclusive. Any-one may put a different interpretation on them. . . This inconclusiveness must awaken a need to go back to the historical sources, i.e. to documents from people who experienced the

traditional facts themselves and thus had the criteria of truth in their own experience. Thus for Luther the acid test of Truth is not objective reality but the person experiencing it.

And Maeder adds in a footnote:

Therefore Luther sees translation of the Bible into German as the decisive task. . . . Through these eye-witness accounts the religious awareness of the masses is to be awakened and made fruitful.

Having analysed this contrast between the static thought of Berthold and the dynamic thought of Luther in their conception of man and in regard to their rhetorical devices, Maeder concludes by applying his analysis to some of the more puzzling phenomena in historical grammar. He treats in turn the differences between the M.H.G. and the modern rendering of the future tense; the M.H.G. use of the genitive; of the particle *ge-*; of the negative; of the generalizing prefix *s-*; and the causal use of *durch*. Dealing, for example, with the use of the future, he explains the M.H.G. use of *sol* and *wil* with the infinitive (instead, that is, of the modern *wird*). Since Berthold does not use the perspective faculty, he cannot see the future as a becoming. Therefore future acts are acts which *have still to be* performed. Hence modal auxiliaries are in place *in their strict use*. The alternative M.H.G. use of *werden* plus present participle (e.g. *werdent sehende*) has a similar thought-content; at some future time a becoming will take place as a result of which the agent will be put in the position of doing: the accent is, however, on the doing and not on the future-ness of the action. This explains also the occasional instances in M.H.G. of the more modern form of the future: at some future time the agent will become something new; the accent is, again, on the becoming and not on the future-ness. Maeder notes that the modal auxiliary may still be used to express the future "mit modaler Farbung", e.g., "Was will noch daraus werden?" Luther, of course, develops the form showing *werden* plus infinitive since he always thinks of future activities as really happening, that is, without modal colouring: he develops the infinitive and not the present participle since he reserves the latter form for a situation describing "emergence"; e.g., "Christus wirt nit liegend" means "Christ cannot put himself in a position where he has to lie."

Even more interesting are Maeder's remarks on the development of *nicht* as the sole symbol of negation. According to

Maeder's reasoning the prefixal or suffixal use of *en-* or *-n* demonstrates clearly M.H.G. *Verdinglichung*. Words are not living things to Berthold but are merely counters; hence to "do-not" is just as real an image as to "do". Moreover, where Berthold uses *niht* in addition, it is plain how he is adding a conception of "nothingness" to his verb. Thus "ich en-gebe niht" means "ich gebe nichts" where the modern "ich gebe nicht nichts" means "ich gebe etwas". Since Berthold is interested in the factual word *gebe* but not in the *fact of giving*, he can negate the word *as a word* and then add the object *nicht* – which means, in effect, *what-is-not-given* (an object).

Maeder's general conclusions may seem somewhat far-fetched since he claims, if I follow him, that the object of literary and philological study must no longer be literary *history* but the study of attitudes to easily analysable qualities such as Space and Time. Nevertheless his own approach shows that such rigid limitation is unnecessary. What the new technique does, in fact, is to supply a very valuable aid with which to study philological questions *in the light of historical development*. In a word, this throws open the field of historical grammar to a real application of the historical method.

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Melbourne University Press, Carlton, N.3, Victoria

A. U. M. L. A.
Journal of the
AUSTRALASIAN UNIVERSITIES
MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION

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